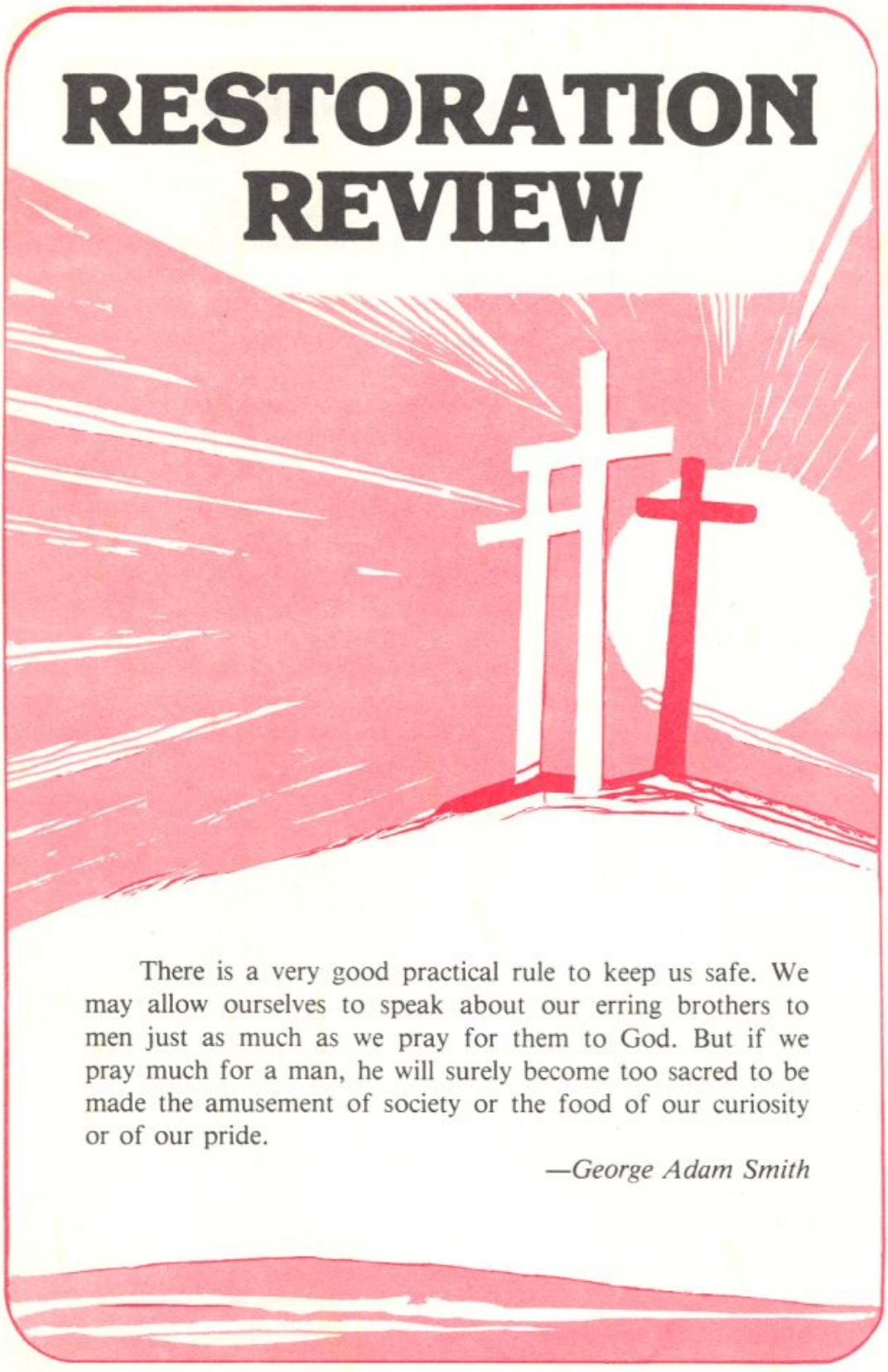
RESTORATION REVIEW



There is a very good practical rule to keep us safe. We may allow ourselves to speak about our erring brothers to men just as much as we pray for them to God. But if we pray much for a man, he will surely become too sacred to be made the amusement of society or the food of our curiosity or of our pride.

—George Adam Smith

Volume 24, No. 6 Leroy Garrett, Editor June 1982

Volume 24, No. 6 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **June 1982**

Jesus Today. . .

THE VOICE OF THE SON OF GOD

The Greeks and the Romans conceived of their gods in terms of *seeing* them, and thus they carved their likenesses in wood and stone, some noble and some ignoble. The Greek gods were usually handsome, not unlike the Greeks themselves, while the Roman gods were often horrendous and fearful to behold. But it was common in ancient religions for the gods to be *seen* in one way or another and for their likenesses to be carved into images of all sorts.

Our forebears of the Old Covenant Scriptures were unique in that they were persuaded that "no man hath seen God at any time," but they were persuaded that He had spoken to certain ones among them. While there was for a long time a proclivity toward idolatry, which found the Israelites carving gods of wood and stone and even gold, after the order of their pagan neighbors. Still they never dared to form a likeness of Yahweh God, for no man could look upon Him and live. Nonetheless His voice could be heard sometimes by certain ones.

Once the last vestige of idolatry had been burned from Israel through long years of captivity, they became fanatical about anything that even approximated a likeness of a god. Jewish leaders would not even allow the Romans to bring their ensigns into Jerusalem since they had images upon them, and when Pilate allowed them to enter anyway, they constrained him to remove them. Wallpaper was an ancient art, but the Jews had nothing on their walls that resembled an image. Gods that could be fashioned by men's hands were false, they were persuaded, and they were devoted to the God that could be heard but not seen.

True, there were manifestations of Yahweh's presence, epiphanies the theologians call them, such as Moses' experience before the burning bush. It is significant that the narrative reads, "God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses'" (Ex. 3:4). All Moses saw was a bush aflame, but he actually heard the God of heaven call to him by name. In the case of Elijah in the cave (1 Kgs. 19) we are told that "Behold, the Lord passed by," and the prophet looked for him in the windstorm, then in the earthquake, and then in the fire. Elijah sensed His presence but He was in none of these phenomena. Then there came "a still small voice." At the presence of *the voice* the prophet wrapped his face with his mantle and stood in the presence of God. But he *saw* nothing. He *heard* the still small voice. "Behold, there came a voice to him, and said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'" (verse 13).

Over and over again in Scripture the phrase appears “The word of the Lord came to _____.” Such as in Hosea 1:1: “The word of the’ Lord came to Hosea” and Joel 1:1: “The word of the Lord came to Joel.” Sometimes a prophet “saw” the word, if not God, as in Isa. 2:1: “The word which Isaiah the son of Amos saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.” It was Jeremiah that made it personal: “Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying.” And the cry of the prophets was, “*Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob,*” as in Jer. 2:4.

They were persuaded that the power of the word was the power of God. The reason why all the earth was to stand in awe of Yahweh was “For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded and it stood forth” (Ps. 33:8). They were persuaded that “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth” (Psa. 33:6).

It would have to follow therefore that “In the beginning was the word.” It could never read *In the beginning was the computer* or *In the beginning was General Motors.* What could have been in the beginning except God’s word? At last that word was revealed in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ, a *man.* In an oblique way God could now be seen: “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn. 14:9).

Still it was the voice of God that was the arbiter even in the mission of the Messiah: “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son” (Heb. 2:1-2). Even with the Christ it was the testimony of God that mattered: “If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true, there is another who bears witness to me, and I know that the testimony which he bears to me is true” (Jn. 5:31).

Thus the word of the Messiah was the word of God speaking through him, and it was Jesus’s *word* more than his presence that made the difference in people’s lives: “You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you” (Jn. 15:3). There are suggestions that the presence of Jesus was not sufficient, but that he must speak words, as in the faith of the centurion: “But say the word, and let my servant be healed” (Lk. 7:7).

All this can serve as background for one of the most exciting truths in Scripture, which points to the power of the voice of the Son of God: “Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live” (Jn. 5:25). Since he had just given the promise of eternal life to those that believe (verse 24), we may conclude that he is referring to the *righteous* dead in verse 25. The believers in their graves will hear the voice of the Christ and live.

When this truth quickened the minds of his hearers, Jesus went on to say: “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment” (verse 29).

This clearly refers to *both* the righteous and the unrighteous. It is a sobering thought that it will be on this occasion that the wicked will for the first time obey the voice of heaven’s envoy to earth. From their graves they will hear the voice of the Son of God, not unlike Lazareth who heard the Lord’s cry, *Come forth!* But they come forth to be judged. The righteous will hear his voice and will come forth to “the resurrection of life.”

It is to be regretted that the old doctrine of “no soulism” and “no judgment for the wicked,” as Alexander Campbell described it in his confrontation with J. B. Ferguson, continues to be taught, even among the heirs of the Stone-Campbell Movement. Both books and bulletins are declaring that there is no hell, that the wicked dies like a dog dies and simply ceases to exist, for man has no immortal soul. The term hell only symbolizes this kind of destruction.

While I would grant that we do not have immortal souls but rather we *are* immortal souls or spirits and have bodies, I strongly disagree with the doctrine that the grave marks the end for the wicked. Apart from all else that might be said on the subject, I rest my case on the words of our Lord in the verses under consideration. Jesus says that *all* who are in the tombs will hear his voice, and the word for *all* in the Greek is emphatic. All will obey his voice and come forth, the righteous and the unrighteous alike, some to a resurrection of life and some to a resurrection of judgment. It is difficult to see how language could be any plainer than that.

Perhaps Acts 24:15 makes it equally clear: “having a hope in God which these themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.”

Yet we are assured by recent publications, one by a respected Church of Christ minister, that death marks the end for the unrighteous, that there will be no resurrection, no judgment, and no hell, for the promise of a resurrection is only for the righteous. It must be granted that the call of the Son of God to the wicked in their graves is hardly a “promise,” for it is rather the call to judgment.

We give the wicked disbelievers (notice that I did not say unbelievers, for there is an important difference) a false security when we teach them that their rebellion against the God of heaven can be no more serious than physical death. Paul spoke of the judgment to come in such terms that even kings were disturbed (Acts 24:25). Should we speak otherwise? It would be good news of sorts if those in rebellion against God had no more to

worry about than dying and ceasing to exist. The old philosopher Socrates was persuaded that this kind of death, ceasing to exist, would be better than life as man now knows it.

But the voice of God that first spoke to man in the garden of Eden will speak to him in his grave. The Son of God will call to all those in their graves and they shall come forth, *all* of them. But he calls them to different destinies. Some he calls to life eternal, a blessed fellowship with the Father; others he calls to judgment.

The words of Jesus are thus words of judgment as well as of hope, depending on the response we make to what heaven has done in our behalf. “He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge,” Jesus told his hearers, “the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day” (Jn. 12:48).

Such teaching should bring us to our knees. If we heed his word *now* we shall live. And what a blessed hope! It need not be otherwise. But those who choose to make it otherwise will one day heed his voice nonetheless, from their graves. - *the Editor*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

What did they do wrong?

THE SIN OF TWO PRIESTLY BROTHERS
(and the Non-Sin of their Two Brothers)

During a TV interview a missionary was asked what five books of the Bible would he take with him to that proverbial island, should he be marooned there. His answer was, “Well, *Leviticus* certainly wouldn’t be one of them.” This put-down of one of “the five books of Moses” led me to look into it more carefully and see if it would be all that useless should one be left with it on that lonely island. With George Knight’s *Leviticus* at my side I have been making my way through this neglected part of the Bible. I am impressed with all the goodies and I am persuaded that one would do well to linger with the great truths of this book, whether on an island or not.

If you were brought up among Churches of Christ, there is one story in *Leviticus* that you have heard again and again. It may in fact be the only thing you know about that book. It is the story of Nadab and Abihu, the priestly sons of Aaron, who committed such a grievous sin that “there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord” (Lev. 10:2). There may be some ambiguity as to precisely what it was that the priestly brothers did that caused such heavenly wrath to come upon them. The KJV tells it this way: “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his

censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not" (verse 1).

Ambiguity or not, our folk through the years have found in this story an incontrovertible argument against instrumental music. The young priests took "strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not," which is the case with instrumental music. It is "strange" music since it is not authorized in the New Testament, and God has not commanded it, not at least for the New Testament church. The implication is clear enough. Those who elect to us an instrument incur the wrath of God, and if judgment does not come as speedily as it did on Nadab and Abihu, there is no question but what it will come in the last day.

This is a classic example of how we have allowed ourselves to treat (or maltreat) the Scriptures, and it illustrates how our interpretation of the Bible is responsible for many of our problems.

Without getting deeper into the story, it should be apparent to us that we are guilty of what might be called "accommodative interpretation" in that we apply to others what we do not apply to ourselves. Is everything that is "strange" to the New Testament church therefore sinful, whether tuningforks, hymnals, baptisteries, shaped notes, communion cups, Sunday Schools, etc., etc.? Is it not indeed "strange" that a people can erect multi-million dollar edifices (amidst a starving world) and yet insist that the use of a piano is sinful since it is something the Lord has not commanded. Are we therefore to conclude that God *has* commanded luxurious buildings? One of our new edifices in Lubbock has been likened to a Hyatt Regency hotel, including a glass elevator! Why is this not offering something to the Lord "that he commanded not"?

It shows that we are very human and sinful in that we find good reasons (not always the *real* reasons) for doing what we want to do, and yet we are not so gracious to others when they choose to do what they want to do. Churches of Christ can be and are very modern *without* instrumental music, and we don't worry too much about how "strange" we would appear to the primitive church or whether God has "commanded" our modernity. We only apply that logic when someone else practices something that we don't want or don't need. We thus have a way of redefining terms: a *heretic* is one who practices what we object to; an *anti* is one who objects to what we practice.

Still without getting into the nature of the sin of Nadab and Abihu, a reading of Lev. 10 will reveal that Aaron had two other sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, who also sinned, or so it seems, arousing the anger of Moses, but the response of both heaven and earth is very different than in the case of Nadab and Abihu.

The surviving brothers, also priests, were to eat the flesh of the goat they had sacrificed for the sins of the people, but they burned it instead (Lev. 10:16). Moses was angry over this infraction of the law, and rebuked them: “Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it is most holy, and God hath given it to you to bear the iniquity of’ the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord.” He goes on to tell them that they should have *eaten* the sacrifice “as I commanded you” (verse 18).

Aaron explains to Moses why the young priests did as they did, and verse 20 says, “And when Moses heard that, he was content.” There was no fire from heaven, no wrath from God, and Moses was satisfied, *even though there had been an infraction of the law.*

While verse 19 gives Aaron’s explanation, one cannot be certain what it was, but it appears to say something like this: due to what has happened today to their brothers, Eleazar and Ithamar (and also Aaron) felt that they should offer the sacrifice for their own sins, for it was hardly a time for eating; “if I had eaten,” Aaron explains, “would it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord.”

There is something very noble here that one hardly expects in a code of law. The surviving brothers had suffered a frightening experience in seeing their own kith and kin destroyed by fire from heaven. Now that it was their turn to go to the altar to make a sacrifice, it seemed inappropriate for them to claim part of the meat for their wages, even if the law prescribed this. Sensitive as they were of their own sins and unworthiness, they offered *all* the sacrifice upon the altar, making no demands for their priestly service.

When Moses saw what they had done, he was angry, for they had not followed his instructions, which of course were the instructions of God. But when he saw that they had acted out of the sensitivity of their hearts rather than a *lack* of sensitivity, he was satisfied that they had done the right thing - even though it was legally wrong!

Now why haven’t we heard more about the *other* sons of Aaron, good old Eleazar and Ithamar, who like their brothers, Nadab and Abihu, transgressed the law, but were justified in doing so? Why is it always Nadab and Abihu and the judgment of fire?

Here we have the key to understanding the sin of the first two priestly brothers: *their hearts were not right before God.* Theirs was a presumptuous sin, for they believed that they knew better than God and Moses how a sacrifice should be offered. They knew very well that the “holy fire” that burned at the altar continually was the source for all the fire to be used in making a sacrifice. Still they took their pans, turned away from the fire that burned at the altar, and took fire from some place beyond the sacred precincts. They then sprinkled incense upon this “strange” fire, which was to go up to the nostrils of God as an acted prayer.

They were saying in effect: *our fire is as good as yours and we are going to do as we please.* It was a high-handed sin, and God did not tolerate it. Fire came forth from the presence of God and consumed them.

Why would priests trained in the ritual do such a thing? Why do men lie, cheat, steal, and fornicate? It is rebellion against the holiness of God. Sinful man is always saying, *Don't tell me what to do or how to live, for I will do as I please.* This was the attitude of Nadab and Abihu, and this explains why they acted as they did.

The infraction of their two brothers was motivated by the very opposite of this. Smitten as they were by the holiness and wrath of God, they could not bring themselves to eat and satisfy themselves at such a time, even if this is what the law prescribed. Moses understood and his anger subsided when he saw it was from an obedient heart that they had acted rather than a rebellious heart.

Now don't you agree that we should lay the story of Nadab and Abihu to rest and forget it as an argument against instrumental music? It is an indignity to ourselves to treat the Bible in any such way. A church may choose to use an instrument, not after the rebellious spirit of a Nadab and Abihu, but with the sensitivity for God's majesty of an Eleazar and Ithamar. We must watch ourselves lest we point to the wrong two sons of poor Aaron! A person may use a piano for the same reason we use a hymnal or four-part harmony, not after the order of Aaron's rebellious sons but his obedient ones.

This is not to say that the sin of Nadab and Abihu is not very much with us today. In fact it is more and more evident in the consumerism, secularism, and humanism of both the church and the world. Whenever we turn from the will of God for our lives and are bent upon doing our own thing in our own way, and let the fear of God be hanged, we are following in the way of Aaron's foolish sons.

But when we stand with hat in hand, smitten by the sins of the world and awed by the magnanimity of God, we are more like Aaron's other two sons - even when we fail to dot every *I* and cross every *T.* —*the Editor*

Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them the dictates of conscience. Nor

does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but strive to live a good life, thanks to his grace.—*Documents of Vatican II*

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

HOW ABOUT THE DIVORCED?

Failure in marriage has become so common that the church is being forced to become more pragmatic in dealing with the issue of divorce and remarriage. Conservative churches, including Churches of Christ, have sought to be loyal to their doctrines on this subject, but they find them unworkable and impractical in an age when there are almost as many divorces as marriages.

The problem is compounded by the fact that divorce is now common among the clergy. A generation ago it was very rare for a preacher among Churches of Christ to be divorced, but today there are numerous instances of this tragedy. Moreover divorce is crouched at the doorstep of us all, in the church and out, and has well nigh become a way of life in that it has affected our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and mothers and fathers. The typical family can count multiple divorces among its members. Abilene Christian University once issued statistics on how few divorces there were among its graduates, but it no longer does so. Some of our preachers and professors, known for their "soundness" on this issue, have been forced to consider a more moderate position when their own children began to divorce.

Recent events among Churches of Christ relative to this issue have been especially embarrassing. Concerted effort has been made to preserve the "old line" position that divorced people who remarry are "living in adultery" unless fornication was the reason for the divorce, and only then "the innocent party" may remarry. Some of our churches have made this a test of fellowship, not allowing divorced people into their membership, except those who have "a scriptural reason."

The divorced among us have often been treated harshly, and there is evidence that many have been driven to other churches or away from the church altogether. They are told that they are living "in sin" and that they must dissolve the "unscriptural" marriage. They are doomed to remain single the rest of their lives or be reconciled to their first mate. While most divorced people among us do not buy this line of reasoning, there have been instances where still another divorce takes place in an effort to rectify the first one, all in the name of sound doctrine. Some leaders among us appear to have no qualms in breaking up still another home.

Fortunately there has been a substantial reaction against this sort of thing, even from conservative circles. There is currently a kind of "division" over this issue, including debates and lots of printer's ink. Even among our "soundest" conservatives there is vigorous debate over the way the relevant Scriptures should be interpreted. While the New Testament says comparatively little about divorce and remarriage, the little that is said is being studied more deeply and the old conclusions are being questioned.

As I have already indicated, this has been motivated largely by the acuteness of the divorce problem and the obvious inadequacy of our old doctrines to deal with it—doctrines that may not have been all that right to start with.

I am persuaded that problems of this sort can be solved only if we think in terms of *principles* rather than to rely on what is presumed to be the correct interpretation of this or that Scripture. The principles must, of course, be supported by Scripture, but principles provide us with a broader view in getting at the problem. I am convinced that the following principles are true and will go far in correcting a lot of shoddy thinking and oppressive behavior.

1. *People who are legally married cannot properly be accused of living "in sin" or "living in adultery," however many times they have been previously married.*

They may be sinners and they may have sinned in divorcing, but they are not guilty of illicit sex if they are married. Jesus recognizes that when one "marries another" he is married. There is therefore no such thing as "living in adultery" among married people, and oddly enough they are the only ones that are marked with this dubious label. It is possible to say that the Samaritan woman in John 4, who had a confrontation with Jesus, was "living in adultery" (though *committing* adultery would be more accurate), but this was because "he whom you now have is not your husband," as Jesus put it to her. "You have had five husbands," Jesus reminded her. She *was* married to these men, presumably one by one, and Jesus passes no judgment in this regard. His judgment was that she was now living with a man not her husband.

2. *Some sins by their very nature are irreparable, and this is true of some sins committed in divorce and remarriage.*

Reparation is a reasonable expectation in repentance. To the extent that we can we are to correct the wrongs done to others. But when this is impossible, in such instances as slander and murder, God in his mercy still forgives us if we repent. The divorced and remarried are told that if a man steals a horse and then repents, he should return the horse. If a man steals another's wife and then repents, he should return the wife. But the issues of life are not always that simple. A horse is mere property, a thing, something easily

negotiable. When two people marry, they *are* married, however questionable the circumstances that brought them together, and there is no way to change the past. God can only forgive the past.

Even when it is granted that one has sinned in divorcing and remarrying, it does not follow that in repenting he must dissolve the second marriage. This implies that a second divorce will atone for the first one. Too, there are often children, sometimes grandchildren, with many lives and deep emotions involved. It is folly to talk about turning the clock back. While circumstances sometimes cannot be changed, and should not be, lives can be redeemed, and this must be the church's concern.

3. *In his forgiving mercy God accepts the sinner where he is, and his commands are not oppressive.*

In all the intricate entanglements of divorce and remarriage the heavenly Father does not demand the impossible. He starts with us where we are and accepts us where we are, even in our most difficult situations. Repentance cannot mean that one must break up still another home and go back and amend the past, but it means not to divorce again. It means to start glorifying God in our lives and to change the way we have been living. A man may be married for the fifth time when he turns to God in repentance. Never mind all those ugly pages of his earlier marriages and divorces, but let him now have a Christian home and live with his present wife "until death do we part," as God intends.

The apostle John gave us a great truth: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome" (1 Jn. 5:3). But we make them burdensome when we make demands of the divorced that are unnatural and impossible. We only drive them from us. The church is to be a haven of rest for the weary, not a judgment hall where the distressed are always in the dock.

4. *Divorce is not the unpardonable sin.*

According to Scripture there is such a sin as the unpardonable sin, but it is not divorce. By the way we sometime treat our divorced people one would suppose it to be the unpardonable sin. If the only way to make things right is to go back through a maze of tragic circumstances and attempt to put Humpty Dumpty back together again, then divorce and remarriage must be unpardonable. If a young brother or sister, who fouled up a marriage while in high school or college and are now divorced, must live in celibacy the rest of their lives, then it must be unpardonable.

But Jesus assures us that every sin committed against the Son of Man will be forgiven (Matt. 12:31), which must be reassuring to those who are scourged by a broken marriage. Divorce is forgivable, even if irreparable.

It was amidst a bad marriage that one of the great prophets found these words, which were repeated by one of the great apostles:

Once you were no people but now you are God's people;

Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy (1 Pet. 2:10)—*the Editor*

From the preaching of some of our brethren, you would not believe that forgiveness was the nature of Christ. So many times they refuse to let the grace of Christ work. They demand law instead of mercy, punishment instead of forgiveness, and afflictions instead of freedom. They rather seem to enjoy and take pride in condemnation instead of salvation. They are like the Pharisees of Jesus' time in that they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with" one of their fingers (Matt. 23:4).—*F. I. Stanley, Crosby Church of Christ, Crosby, Tx*

.

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

A NOISY, JOYLESS CHURCH OF CHRIST

I do not intend for this to be a judgmental essay, and I am not trying to be critical of Churches of Christ. It is just that in today's mail came two items that set me to thinking on these two conditions, noisy and joyless. Both may be generally true of the church at large, but these communications, one from Texas and the other from Indiana, are from Churches of Christ.

The New Braunfels Bulletin, published by the Church of Christ in that Texas hill country town, had this admonition to its people: "The noise level in our services has continued to climb and to become distracting. Let's give attention to eliminate unnecessary talking and movement and to make wise use of the cry room during services."

This note reminded me that our folk, for good or ill, *are* noisy. I say for good or ill, for it may not be all that bad to be noisy. I am only inviting you to think along with me. Maybe it depends on what we are noisy about. If the early Christians were all that quiet, such as when they gathered in the underground catacombs of Rome, it was because they sought to escape detection, for it was actually against the law to be a Christian. When they

were free to assemble how and when they pleased, their services may have been more like the winner's dressing room after a Super Bowl game, as one church historian has suggested.

Churches of Christ are noisy. Maybe that is OK, maybe not. Suppose that we are so glad to see each other that our exuberance, our overflowing love, is not all that quiet. If 100 people (the average size of our churches) are embracing, rejoicing, praising the Lord, enjoying being part of God's family in vestibule and aisles, it may be a bit noisy but is not that all right? Are we to set aside part of the building that we call "the sanctuary" and enter it as if we were entering the most holy place? Are we to approach that room with "a worshipful attitude," and are we to slap the kids around so as to make sure they sit starch-straight "in church" or for "worship," which begins at 9:45? Up until that hour and outside "the sanctuary" they can rip and tear as they please, but they are to cool it when "worship" starts. It is true that the grown folk can be quite noisy as they sit, even in "the sanctuary," waiting for that first song that begins "the acts of worship."

While there is a place for small talk, whether at home or at the assembly, one would suppose that if Christians are noisy when they get together it would be mostly over spiritual concerns. I'll go for it if the noise is a sharing of what we have learned from the Scriptures that week, or in praising God for the victories he has given us that week, for that too is worship and such worship may be noisy.

But I concede that the admonition from the hill country church has a point. So often we are noisy other than as described above, and I suspect the Episcopalians would accuse us of not knowing what worship is. But that indictment might work both ways. I can see us in celebration all the way from the parking lot to the vestibule and right down into the aisles and in our seats, enjoying each other and praising God for his bounties. But it is appropriate for us to settle in and prepare ourselves for what might properly be called "corporate worship" or the worship of the Body in assembly.

It would be a good time to read a few more verses from the Scriptures or to quietly pray that the hour will be to the glory of God. It can be a quiet time to think about and pray for the sisters and brothers we see taking their places, some of whom we know are having a hard time of it. We don't have to be mumbling to the brother in the seat behind us about the bargain we got on a new set of tires. Something very important is about to happen *with the Body in assembly.* We do well to give that experience the dignity it deserves.

In the same mail that came today is this letter from a sister in Indiana who has just discovered *Restoration Review,* and she is delighted to learn that there are others with her concerns. She supposed she was all alone in her hopes for renewal among Churches of Christ, or nearly so. Now she finds a journal, deep in the heart of Texas, that is saying what

she herself has been thinking. It is common for us to get such letters. There are many thousands among our churches who share our concerns, though we have not all found each other yet.

For several pages she pours out her concerns, but these lines especially caught my eye: “Do we in the Church of Christ really know what it is to *worship* and *praise*, lifting up holy hands to our Father, being filled with joy. Nehemiah said the joy of the Lord is your strength. Where is our joy?”

This time I found no place for equivocation. We have to concede, do we not, that generally speaking the Churches of Christ are joyless? We may go to church more than anyone else, but it is probable that we enjoy it less. And if we are as wary of Satan’s devices as we ought to be, we will realize that that is all the old Deceiver has to do to render our religion ineffective, *take away its joy.* Satan is not concerned when we work hard at our religion, even to the point of sacrifice, if he can but keep it joyless.

Our problem may be that we have not learned to share with each other, for, as Mark Twain wisely observed, to get the full value of joy we must have somebody to divide it with. So long as we are afraid of each other or of the elders, or afraid of being wrong, we will not venture into those experiences with others that bring joy. Joyous folk have learned to take chances, learned not to take themselves too seriously, and learned to be vulnerable in the presence of others. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, named *next* to love in Gal. 5:22, and it is evident that joy is not something that we can generate on our own. In fact Paul relates joy to “the power of the Holy Spirit” in Rom. 15:13, and in Rom. 14:17 he insists that the kingdom of God finds its meaning in the “peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

We are not therefore far off base when we conclude that the joy-filled believer is the Spirit-filled believer. And that brings us to the point of the sister’s letter from Indiana. If we among Churches of Christ are joyless, it can only be because we have deprived ourselves of the source of joy, the Holy Spirit. Throughout much of our history that now extends nearly a century we have hardly known that the Holy Spirit has been given. Many of our leaders have either identified the Spirit with the Scriptures or limited its work and mission to them, bequeathing to us the unique and abstruse (and almost certainly erroneous) doctrine of “the Spirit operates only through the word.”

The Scriptures assure us that the Spirit *helps* us and *comforts* us and *fills* us. Those who are deprived of such promises are not likely to benefit from “the joy of the Holy Spirit.”

Perhaps the two qualities that we are looking at, quietness and joy, go together, both being fruit of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, when one is inebriated of the Spirit (as with other kinds of spirits!) he may be noisy, and we are to recognize this. But one filled with the Spirit may be ever so quiet, peaceful, and gentle—just as other spirits make one this way too! How impressive it is when one is quiet and peaceful and joyous when the storms of life are raging about her—all because Jesus Christ is within.

Ouida reminds me now and again of the passage her mother impressed upon her children, *Study to be quiet* (1 Thess. 4:11). It is a timely admonition in our noisy world, even in our noisy churches. It certainly had its effect upon Ouida. If all of us in Churches of Christ were like her and her mother, we could never be called noisy and joyless. Well, we are working on it.—*the Editor*

MYTHS OF THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT (4)

W. Carl Ketcherside

The truth revealed to us from heaven was never intended to be static. It was not a stagnant pool filling a depression hollowed out in one year of time. I think that the actual revelation was completed during the lifetime of the apostles and prophets. This brings me into some conflict with those who think there are prophets of God now. I especially ran into the problem in the 1960's when I was doing a lot of work on university campuses. Some college student, who was generally like Elijah, "a hairy man and girt with a leather girdle about his loins," would arise and say, "Hear the word of the Lord which came to me this morning," and then quote from the King James Version. I've often wondered where these prophets are now, and if they are still with it. They were a spin-off from the drug culture which blew the minds of so many of our youth, and led them into fantasies.

But I realize that while the revelation was complete, the understanding and grasp of it was never so in any generation. It was accepted into the hearts of men and given a thorough mastication by their minds. But no one approaches knowledge in a vacuum. Every experience of life, every hardship and every pleasure, enter into his heart and influence him. So truth is a river, ever flowing, sometimes rapidly, sometimes slowly, but always relentlessly through history. As it glides along it affects and changes the terrain, but the terrain also affects it. The stream is colored by the minds through which it is funneled. It picks up sediment. This does not affect the truth but it does affect our approach to it and our comprehension of it. It does demand that there be periodic reformations in which the waste matter can be filtered out and the water purified.

It must not be forgotten, however, that those who seek to do the straining are also caught up in the human predicament. They are subject to errors in judgment, to personal preferences, and to pride of attainment as were many of their ancestors whose mistakes they seek to correct. Almost every movement known to me, forgetting extraneous matters which have influenced its thought patterns, begins to think it has arrived while everyone else is still departing. It feels that it has truth in its cage and congratulates itself that no one else has access to this rare and untamed specimen. The movement may awaken some morning to learn that it was mistaken in identification and has been feeding and nurturing something else all of the time.

I rather think this is one of the myths plaguing "the restoration movement." It began at a certain time in history, in a specific part of the world, among those who were a frontier people. Most of them were kind, considerate and compassionate. They were hospitable. The latchstring hung on the outside. Some of them were grossly ignorant but this was no fault of their own. Most everyone else was in the same flatboat as themselves. It was a natural consequence for them to assume that their will was God's will, and that God had said what they came to understand that he meant by what he said. There would probably be no particular harm ensue if they had been a little more modest but they felt called upon to take the platform and vigorously denounce everyone who did not share their views and who resented their playing God with the lives of others.

While I am a little reluctant to open this kind of a can of worms, I think that a good case can be made that, morally and ethically, "the restoration movement" as we know it, is not so much a revival of God's revelation as it is a reflection of the Puritan, rural and southern cultures which have influenced it far beyond its willingness to admit. As a youngster I recall how restricted life was for us. Confusing the Jewish sabbath with the first day of the week, we were forbidden to participate in any innocent game on Sunday afternoon. No dominoes. No checkers. No baseball. No basketball. No nothing! We were continually bombarded with such misapplied scriptures as "Shun the very appearance of evil." I came to appreciate what Thomas Babington Macauley had written, "The Puritans hated bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators." I also agreed that the Puritans celebrated Thanksgiving because they were delivered from the Indians; we celebrate it because we were delivered from the Pilgrims.

Our brethren had no qualm about threatening everyone with perdition who attended a movie. This tactic did not make better disciples but it did serve to make bigger hypocrites. Lurid tracts were passed out entitled, "From Hollywood to Hell." It was made to appear that the apostles, who never saw a movie camera, or any other, for that matter, had them in mind by extension in a number of statements they made. Apparently they excluded the use of tobacco because many of the preachers who came down hardest on the foibles of the

age carried a plug of Brown Mule and took a pretty good cut of it as soon as they got down from behind the sacred desk. Apparently they did not taste it because “Touch not, taste not, handle not” was the passage frequently quoted and just as often misapplied.

The rustic influence was manifested in our anti-intellectual status. Fifty years ago we were afraid of someone who went away and secured a higher education. We had not yet heard of the Communists and we had to be afraid of someone. Many of us went to one-room schoolhouses, some constructed of logs. Frequently the same building doubled for the holding of religious meetings on Sunday. We were pretty crude. We thought the best board of education was a pine shingle applied to the seat of the difficulty. If a person went away to college and got a degree we said he would lead the church to hell by *degrees.* If he used good English we accused him of “putting on airs,” and said he was “getting too big for his breeches. “

The same spirit was manifested in the preoccupation with the length of women’s dresses and the height of their shoe heels. Modesty was not so much restraint by a sense of propriety as it was limitation enforced by preachers. It was a man’s world and man ruled it with an iron hand and roughshod. I shall never forget my father (bless his memory) and other preachers likening women who cut their hair to streetwalkers and “chippies” (our vernacular for prostitutes). It was difficult to make the slow transition from a rural culture to an urban one.

When we began to get water in our homes and it was suggested that we put in a baptistery a good many people actually gave up and quit the church rather than sanction the sacred rite performed in a box under the pulpit. I have cut the ice many times and immersed people who stood shivering on the bank in their wet clothing with teeth chattering and beating out a tattoo to the song “Happy Day” which was always sung after a baptism to make it official.

Science does not stand still. It continues to work and investigate and invent new things even if all the Christians on earth stand wringing their hands in desperation. The radio came into being and we were against it. We searched the scriptures to find why and we found passages that we could use against it. Then came television. Men stood in the pulpits and condemned it as the way that Satan had of invading our homes. People were urged to throw the rascal out if they had already purchased one. Some factions gave those whom they immersed thirty days to cast their set to the moles and the bats or be withdrawn from.

What we did not realize was that all of these are neutral in and of themselves. It is the heart of man which determines how they are used. They are like a knife which is powerless to do anything good or evil because it does not have volition. But in the hands

of one person it can be used to slice ham; while in the hands of another it is used to stab his neighbor. Those who are members of the restoration movement are like thousands of others. They are victims of their past. They need to realize this and become more charitable toward others. We have not yet learned all we need to know about God's will for us.

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

OUR CHANGING WORLD

A woman in Alturas, Ca. recently expressed her frustration to the *Christian Standard* relative to her life in a Church of Christ. "Little did I ever dream that I would be living in a tiny town and attending a non-instrumental church where a woman's place is to be a silent observer," she wrote, confessing her frustration, and added: "I know there must be many women in the same position." This sister may have pointed to one of our more serious sins, the way we treat our women. The more aggressive ones can, of course, carve out their own ministry in their communities, but Body life in the assembly can and must include a greater role for our sisters.

The Council on Christian Unity of the Disciples of Christ is setting up a fund in honor of Peter Ainslie (1867-1934), the purpose of which is "to continue his ongoing witness to Christian unity in a strife-torn world." Those of you who read my history of our Movement will know how highly I esteem this prophet of Christian unity. He has challenged all our people as few men have. Most of us are unwilling to be as bold in attacking "the scandal of Christianity," as he described the divided church, as did Peter Ainslie. If you are interested in more information, write the Council at Box 1986, Indianapolis 46206.

The Southwest Church of Christ in Houston is creating a chaplaincy ministry at the famous M. D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute. A full time chaplain will help minister to the 2,000 patients that are treated each day, 50 of whom are members of Churches of Christ. The church hopes to extend this program to a corp of chaplains who will serve all eight hospitals of the Texas Medical Center.

We have told you before of the ministry of R. O. Brinkley, a brother who for many years has made evangelistic visits to India with satisfying results. He does this on his own, trusting the Lord that his needs will be met, which are modest, and they always are. This summer he is to be joined by 15 young people with construction skills, who will help the Indians repair or erect meetinghouses. If you want to help, write Gospel Partners, Box 253, Tryon, NC 28782.

At the spring commencement Abilene Christian University conferred 688 degrees. Willard Tate, formerly ACU's basketball coach, addressed the graduates, telling them, "If you have love in your life, it can make up for a great many things you lack. If you don't have it, no matter what else there is, it's not enough. "

The founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators, W. C. Townsend, died April 23 at age 85. He was a missionary to the ethnic minorities of the world for 65 years, his chief concern being to give them the Scriptures in their own language. Challenged in his youth by a Guatemalan with "If your God is so great, why doesn't He speak our language?," he began a work that has resulted in Scripture being translated into 900 minority languages. Hailed by Billy Graham as the greatest missionary of our time, Townsend will continue to inspire Wycliffe's translation work, which reports that they still have 3,000 languages to go.

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

BOOK NOTES

One of the most gifted writers within our Movement is Robert Shank, who is now giving most of his time to writing. *Until: The Coming of Messiah and His Kingdom* is a comprehensive survey of the prophetic Scriptures. He writes of the coming world kingdom, soon to appear on earth as the consummation of all history and as the prelude to the ultimate realization of the kingdom in its eternal dimension in the new heaven and new earth. It is reported that Shank's premillennial position in this book has affected his standing among Churches of Christ, among which he has been ministering for some years. *Until* is a big bargain at 11.95 postpaid. He has also recently published *Sources of Power of the Apostolic Witness,* which points to sources of power that the church today has tragically neglected. 4.50 postpaid.

If you are interested in an in-depth, easy-to-read, study of Biblical theology, or as its sub-title reads, "A summary of Christian doctrine based on Biblical revelation," we recommend *The Word of Truth,* a 628-page book by Dale Moody, a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. It is actually a systematic theology with every major subject studied, whether revelation, God, Christ, the Spirit, the church, man, sin, the consummation, etc. Since he is a Baptist theologian, you will be surprised at his treatment of salvation and apostasy. He refers to Robert Shank's *Life in the Son* and calls on his readers to answer him with Scripture and not with emotion! The price is 24.95 postpaid.

For 4.50 postpaid we will send you *Science and the Quest for Meaning*, which explores the compatibility of science and faith. He sees no need for the two to square off, for while science cannot answer ultimate questions, it is vitally important, giving us fresh material for our wonder and worship. Christian faith on the other hand provides the most rational basis for the practice of science.

For 18.95 postpaid we will send you what we believe to be the best of Bible dictionaries, *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, which the *Christian Herald* describes as "a goldmine of information about every major topic in the Bible."

While it is yet in print we can send you *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* by Robert Richardson, which for over a century has been the most important account of the Stone-Campbell Movement, being sub-titled "A View of the Origin, Progress and Principles of the Religious Reformation which He Advocated." 19.95 postpaid.

We have a new supply of *Interpreting Revelation* by Merrill C. Tenney, which is one of the best books ever on the last book of the Bible. 8.95 postpaid.

Edwin S. Gaustad, professor of history at the University of California, Riverside, has now given us *A Documentary History of Religion in America*, Vol. I, which goes to the Civil War. It is all there, a study of history through the important documents that emerged, whether the ceremony of Hopi Indians, the trial of Anne Hutchinson, the oratory of Jonathan Edwards, the last will and testament of Barton W. Stone, selections from Alexander Campbell, or the martyrdom of Joseph Smith. Since the author included a picture of Alexander Campbell and his wife, he can be forgiven for giving the second wife the name of the first one in the caption under the picture. If you want to learn something of American religion in terms of the writings it has created, this book is a must. 535 pages; 15.95 postpaid, soft cover.

Faith and opinion are at the root of our difficulties in reference to fellowship, and W. Robert Palmer has done us all a service with his *What the Bible Says About Faith and Opinion.* The quotations from the pioneers on this subject are worth the 11.95 pp. that it will cost you.

We offer special prices on concordances. *Cruden's*, the handy reference edition is only 5.95 postpaid, while the large *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, which doubles as a Hebrew and Greek dictionary, is just 16.95 pp.

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

READER'S EXCHANGE

In reference to William Barclay in the April issue, maybe we could make him an honorary member of the Church of Christ?—*Numa Crowder, Macomb, IL.*

I had just received your history book when your card arrived. I have been able only to leaf through the book but hope very soon to study it through. Your authorship is ample guarantee of the merits of the book. I remember your work from its early beginnings and have very much appreciated it through the years. I still remember with gratitude the opportunity I had to meet and talk with you at the Unity Forum in Nashville in 1974. As I approach 72 I am still in full time ministry plus a number of extracurricular activities.—*David H. Bobo, Fountain Square Church of Christ, Indianapolis.*

How did Christ answer the question of liberal-conservative? He said John the Baptist came appealing to the conservative while he appealed to the liberal (Lk. 7:31-35) and both were rejected. "Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children" (verse 35). I take this to mean that those who learn to love, as the two commandments and the new commandment teach, can accept both extremes and come up with a balanced Christianity. It is extremism that keeps the gospel from spreading. Today in America the stress is on "the church teaches" instead of "Christ teaches."—*Bob Wilson, Cincinnati, Oh.*

I have really enjoyed your publication for the last year. It is so refreshing to find someone in the Church of Christ who acknowledges that it is possible we don't have all the answers. I have for years feared that our attitude was much closer to the first century Pharisees (who also had all the answers) than the first century church as we have claimed. We should examine the Lord's comments in Jn. 5:19-47, with particular emphasis on verses 37-42. If we read this with open hearts I believe conviction could very well result. There are all kinds of Christians out here who feel most comfortable with Church of Christ general doctrine but have a great problem with the dogmatism attached to the peripheral issues.—*Don Harris, Garland, TX.*

Congratulations on an outstanding issue (May). I read it from cover to cover without putting it down. I was especially impressed by your article on baptism. It took a lot of courage, and I imagine you will receive a lot of flack, but PTL! But I must challenge one statement. The Bible never says we are "saved by baptism." 1 Pet. 3:21 says "In like manner baptism saves you," or "baptism,' *which corresponds to this,* now saves you. He is using a comparative analogy to the water of Noah's flood, and it is obvious that Noah was not saved by the water but by the grace of God.—*David Reagan, Box 527, Plano, TX 75074.*

You continue to tax my thinking. You *make* me think about things and problems that I had rather shun, but honesty will not permit me to do that. While I maintain that you are way out in left field on a number of subjects and I'll tell anyone "Read brother Garrett's writings with great caution!," I'll also tell them "Be honest and open!"—*Tharon Wayne Marshall, Gurley, IL.*

When I was a child I knew the people of the Church of Christ where we were members as friendly, congenial folk that seemed like members of my family. To be with them was like being with relatives, and being at church was like being at home. As I grew older and attended high school and college at Lipscomb I began to learn a different side of the Church of Christ. The narrowness, the pettiness, the self-righteous sectarianism, the vicious attacking and fighting over contrived issues showed me a different aspect. . . I began visiting the Park Ave. Christian Church (New York City) and to read Garrison and DeGroot. It soon became clear to me that I had re-found my long-lost church home. The warm, loving spirit of the people was overwhelming, and I began for the first time in many years to experience the church in a setting that was not judgmental, self-righteous, legalistic, or unpleasant in general. I have been at home with Disciples ever since those days and can't help wishing the same joyful and creative experience for all my former Church of Christ friends that are so cramped and distorted by the legalisms of restorationism.—*Name withheld*

(This man's family was very influential in the Church of Christ in Nashville, and we give part of his testimony to show that disheartened Church of Christ folk find their way out of what they see to be a predicament in different ways. Some can go to the Disciples or to the Christian Church, and thus remain within our historic heritage, and some cannot. Some go to other denominations or to the Bible churches. Some unfortunately quit church altogether. Some remain and endure considerable discomfort in hopes of changing things. Ours must be an attitude of forbearance, realizing that when our sisters and brothers choose to leave us they are not necessarily leaving Christ or his church. And we must be most helpful of those who are still with us, who are suffering like this brother once suffered.—*Ed*.)

I have felt for sometime that the movement as a whole had something vital to give specifically to this day in an emphasis upon a truly rational and genuinely warm approach to the Bible . . .I think that an offense to the mind is in fact an offense to the heart. - *Roger Carstensen, Athens, Ga.*

We regret to be a month behind in our mailing schedule, which is due in part to back-to-back illnesses of the editor, a kidney infection and then hepatitis. But you should receive your next issue, the September number, during that month. You will remember that we do not publish in July and August.

Dave Reagan, who leads our tour to Israel in November, says that one is safer now in Israel than before, for the PLO is no longer firing into Israel. Send for a brochure if you think you might be able to make the trip with us. If ever you plan to go, this should be the time.

We have now sold nearly 750 copies of *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett from our office alone. The reviews and responses are encouraging, especially from the rank and file. It is readable, entertaining, and informative, they say. The price is 21.95 postpaid. You should do yourself a favor and read this book.

⁂ ⁂ ⁂

Address all mail to: 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, TX 76201*

RESTORATION REVIEW is published monthly, except July and August, at 1201 Windsor Drive, Denton, Texas. Entered as second class mail, Denton, Texas. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: $5.00 a year, or two years for $8.00; in clubs of four or more (mailed by us to separate addresses) $3.00 per name per year. (USPS 044450). POSTMASTER: Send address changes to RESTORATION REVIEW, *1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas 76201.